

# The Church in Korea

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PRESBYTERIANS in Korea commemorated the 50th anniversary of their first General Assembly with celebrations at Seoul's 7,000-member Youngnak Presbyterian Church, and with painfully earnest, but thus far unsuccessful, attempts at reunion.

United States Ambassador to Korea, Samuel Berger, saluted the Assembly's new moderator, the Rev. Kee-Hyuk Lee, at a special jubilee service, as "a linear representative of what is probably Korea's oldest institutional democracy."

The Presbyterian Church in Korea, the country's largest Protestant denomination, was first established as an independent, self-governing elective presbytery in 1907, and as a General Assembly in 1912.

Looking ahead, the Assembly adopted a five-year, five-pronged evangelistic program and approved in principle a call for 100 new missionaries to help in evangelizing the unreached 93 per cent of the country's population.

Fraternal delegates from the three cooperating Churches, Dr. L. Nelson Bell of the Presbyterian Church, U.S., Dr. George Sweazey of the United Presbyterian Church, and the Rev. Colin Dyster, stated clerk of the Aus-

tralian Presbyterian Church, were asked to participate in evangelistic meetings both before and after the Assembly.

Looking back, the Assembly agonized over its lost unity. Less than a mile away, in another church, a rival Assembly was in session, representing about one-third of the Church's members who had broken away from the parent body in 1959 in an anti-ecumenical schism.

During the week, this separatist Assembly was split again by the violent withdrawal of a small group of shouting extremists related to Dr. Carl McIntire's anti-ecumenical International Council of Christian Churches.

In the hope that the withdrawal of extremists might pave the way for reconciliation, both Assemblies moved to end their sessions by recess rather than by formal adjournment, leaving a door open for possible reunion in the "Jubilee Year."

Prospects for a rapid rapprochement, however, were not bright. Stern conditions were laid down by the anti-ecumenical Assembly. They included withdrawal from the Korean NCC and the severance of relationship with all missionaries who are related to the WCC. This would break the

Korean Church's historic relationship with the United Presbyterian, Southern Presbyterian and Australian Presbyterian missions. The conditions were rejected by the Ecumenical Assembly.

As a result of the week's developments, the evershifting pattern of Presbyterianism in Korea now shapes up somewhat as follows:

The Presbyterian Church in Korea (Ecumenical Assembly) includes about 49 per cent of the total Presbyterian constituency of the country. It has 374,000 adherents, as compared with the 235,000 adherents of the second largest Korean Protestant denomination, the Methodist Church.

The rest of Korea's Presbyterians are divided into three major groups and a handful of splinters.

The anti-ecumenical Assembly includes 32 per cent of the Presbyterian constituency and unites a 1951 schism with a 1959 schism into a fragile reunion which opposes both the WCC and the ICCC. It is related to the Orthodox and the Bible Presbyterian Churches.

The ROK Presbyterian Church represents 15 per cent of the Presbyterian constituency and is a more liberal schism related to the United Church of Canada. It separated in 1954.

The Koryu Presbyterian Church (about two per cent of the constituency) is what is left of the

1951 schism when one large segment of that Church refused to enter the anti-ecumenical reunion of 1960.

All the rest (another two per cent) are splinters, like the Reconstruction Presbyterian Church which still keeps alive the issue of compromise with Japanese Shinto worship; the Bible Presbyterian Church, a 1960 McIntire schism; and this week's latest McIntire schism which will have nothing to do with the former McIntire schismatics but which is now forming its own 20-man Assembly.

The splinters are irritating but peripheral. Major hopes for Protestant renewal and revival in Korea will center for the future on the rocky road to reunion along which, with varying degrees of speed, the country's three major Presbyterian Churches are traveling. If they can reach reunion and face outward together for Christ in this generation, the Church will celebrate its next jubilee in less than 50 years.

Let me point out as most significant: (1) The Assembly's unanimous call for new missionaries, (2) the continuing anti-ecumenical spirit of the schismatic Assembly even after two groups of McIntire's henchmen have been siphoned off, and (3) the numerical weakness (only 15 per cent of the Presbyterian constituency) of the more liberal ROK Presbyterians.



# Monday morning

p. 7

A MAGAZINE FOR PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERS

When we speak of man having a new life in relationship to other men, we are intimating the possibility of a new humanity. Is the Church, then, the new humanity? The answer is "no." But the Church is in our world as the "first fruits of the new humanity." This New Testament image is selected to remind the Church of its own life and mission. In the Old Testament the first fruits were returned to God as an offering, recognizing the fact that the whole harvest came from Him. And the first fruits were also considered a pledge of the harvest to come.

The Church thus sees itself as a pledge of the great harvest, God's promise of a new humanity. The Church, therefore, itself becomes a part of the Good News it proclaims. But the Church is not something to be preserved, for the first fruits became an offering—thus the Church offers itself to God as a sign that its very life is a gift of His Grace.

With joy, the Church, no matter how small or oppressed, no matter how frustrated in its efforts—with joy it knows it is the promise of a new humanity. With confident joy the Church offers itself as an instrument to bring in the harvest. No opposition can stop what God is doing; indeed, what appears as opposition may be the Church's greatest opportunity for witness.

The Church is meant to be a missionary community—carrying its message into each *oikos* where it exists, then leaping all barriers of class, or race, or culture, or nation into other *oikos* that the new humanity in Christ might be revealed.—*From an address by the Rev. Donald Black, Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, delivered in Ibadan, Nigeria, August 1962.*

Published by  
The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

DECEMBER 3  
1962

Volume 27  
No. 21

